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VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1 MONTHLY

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How to obtain your copies: Each monthly issue can be obtained by placing a regular order with your newagent, or you may take out a postal subscription. Cost of a subscription for one year is £3.60 within UK, £ire and overseas (including postal and packing charges).

Send a crossed cheque or postal order made payable to New English Library Ltd.

to: Subscriptions Department, NEL, Bernard's Inn, Holborn, London EC1N 2JH.

Back Numbers: Available on order - UK 30p each - New English Library Ltd., Bernard's Inn,

Holborn, London EC1N 2JH; Australia: Gordon & Gotch Ltd., 374 - 380 Lonsdale St., Melbourne 3000;

New Zealand: Gordon & Gotch (N.Z.) Ltd., P.O. Box 1598, 102 Adelaide Rd., Newtown, Wellington;

South Africa: Central News Agency Ltd., P.O. Box 10977, Johannesburg.

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Introduction

Science fiction magazines in this country have had a somewhat chequered history. It is strange that while books on science fiction command a very large readership, magazines do not. In Science Fiction Monthly we have tried a different approach from any other sf magazine. We have attempted to produce a magazine that emphasises visual interpretation of science fiction. Over the past few years letters from readers of our sf books have expressed two desires: (1) they want the top in science fiction reading and; (2) they have requested copies of the artwork used on the covers of the books. In this magazine we have attempted to combine both.

Month by month we intend to publish new science fiction literature together with the more established classics, plus news and views of science fiction throughout the world and features on leading writers and artists in the realms of this medium. In addition, we will present large reproductions of top artwork by well known sf artists. Also, from time to time, we will make book and paperback offers to our readers through our Science Fiction Book Club. (More about this later.) In this issue we bring you two brand new short stories, *Melancholia* has a Plastic Core by Brian Aldiss, Britain's foremost writer of science fiction, and *A Woman Naked* by Christopher Priest, one of the most promising young writers in this field. As well as this, you will find an extract from Isaac Asimov's *Pirates of the Asteroids*, first published in 1953 as *Lucky Star* and *The Pirates of The Asteroids* under the name Paul French, an article on *Special Effects and the Science Fiction Film* by John Brosnan, a profile on one of Britain's top sf artists, Bruce Pennington, plus sf news and views. Cover art this month includes work by Bruce Pennington, Ray Feibush, EM Clifton-Dey and Gordon C Davies. We hope you find our first issue interesting and welcome your views and comments.



JIM FITZPATRICK

Using a sackful of stolen power-cards, and sleeping in disused air-stores, I travelled among the Zodiacal Planets looking for a girl to whom I had once been married, either in reality or in a very clever simulation-trip on Grazia Tante II.

One of the last of the supply of power-cards took me under the Nigguchot Falls on Melancholia. Melancholia's government practices an odd Back-to-Basics philosophy, so they're lucky to have plenty of winds and waterfalls to help civilization along.

You have the sensation of being in a backwater as soon as you arrive. Melancholia is a small pseudoplanet, almost entirely covered with little safe suburban conurbations – no urbstaks, just an undergrowth of homelets punctuated by shopping centres and percentor shops. Ideal place for Zbbeennaa, who was classified as MLA (Middlebrow Life Artist) back in the days of our marriage, if marriage it had been. I'd been contemptuous of the classification then – knowing little – and had had neon ulnas installed to prove it.

The ticky-tacky houses multiplied right at

knew he was doing his turn. His posture, his gestures, told me so.

Zbbeennaa looked as ever, exotically beautiful in a rundown hausfrau way, divinely slender while being hideously overweight. Don't ask me how she did it. I had lived with her contradictory behaviour once (it must have been me) because I found it impossible not to lust over both Mata Haris and banal dumpy housewives. She saw me but did not choose to give me notice of the fact until I was within a couple of metres of the table. So that I could hear her say, "Yes, John, but why not design a clock that never indicates ten-thirty?"

All the men laughed extravagantly, and in the middle of their laughter, she stood up and said, "Lafcadio Hunter, you on Melancholia? Did you lose your way or your profession?"

For the benefit of the man called John, I put my arms round her and kissed her. It turned out to be for my benefit. She got the tip of her tongue between my lips.

"Mmm, love your after-shave. What is it?"

Melancholia has a Plastic Core

by Brian Aldiss

the verge of the Nigguchot Falls. I caught a hovercab which advertised Frosted Frozies on its roof, rode down to splash-level, and stepped out on the lower observation platform. Right above my head, sixty thousand tons of water were dropping sheer every second, and manufacturing multitudinous decibels doing it. I went through theturnstile at a run to avoid getting drenched, throwing down my dollar entry-fee between strides.

In under the waterfall, carved in the cliff, was the Falls Café. A tourist trap, of course; artists were supposed to drink there, according to legend, and the municipality hired artists for the purpose. Zbbeennaa was the sort of artist who would allow herself to be hired for that sort of thing. So I reasoned, and my wispriter had agreed the chances of finding her here were not vanishingly faint.

The Falls Café was done in sad décor. Bare board walls, with old-fashioned paintings, mauve on black, a pianofortechilli sounding, and always in the background the failed sound of water giving in violently to gravity.

She was there.

She was with a man. She was with three men, but I could see which was *the* man – a neat bunched guy with straight brown hair shelving forward and little darting dark eyes. He was sitting with his shoulders hunched moodily over a drink, holding forth to the others.

I knew that he was her man and the other two weren't by something in his manner which reminded me of one of Zbbeennaa's characteristics I had forgotten – oddly enough, since I had thought of little but Zbbeennaa and her problems for the several seasons past: her ability to turn all living into acting, and all her friends into actors. Something in her personality made them perform in her presence. Directly I set eyes on this guy with the aframilla-and-time, I

"No man can smell that good for long and live. *Hemingway's Breath*, they call it." I felt myself already slipping into my old hated whimsical role, ready-made for her presence.

"And your ulna still lights up, you honey!"

I flipped it off with a twitch of the elbow. The men were still laughing. The man called John turned his little wet terrier eyes to Zbbeennaa and said, "Can I try to make your ulna light up, pet?"

Getting myself between the two of them, I said to her, "I came to warn you that there is going to be a flash earthquake in three minutes time and this place will collapse under water. Leave with me while there's still time."

She had been sipping a ukelele-benz. She drained it, said "See you tomorrow" to the boys, and walked out with me.

At the door, I looked back in time to catch Johnny Boy's teakwood scowl. He pointed one finger at me like the barrel of a gun. Still acting, I thought.

Her house was in Pensive Crescent, indistinguishable from many similar streets. A wind blew dust, old advertisements, and a broken toy drum along the roadway. She palmed us in and watched me ironically as I prowled round, looking about, quizzing. Two floors, three rooms down, three rooms up; below the house, a communal swim-pool that stretched below the other houses sharing it. Untidy, but not really messy; depressing, but not really disconsolate; intriguing, but not really inviting – in her old style.

I picked up a nightgown, folded but left on a table. "Untidy but not really messy, in your old style. A typical MLA shack."

She smacked me, lightly but hard enough. Oh, that trait I had not forgotten!

"Critical but not really condemnatory, in

your old style."

"Did you believe you had only three minutes to leave the café, Zbbeennaa?"

"We have no earthquakes on Melancholia. Melancholia has a plastic core."

"What else?" I wandered around. Had not we two once lived in a house much like this, sharing everything, hoping much, gradually losing our way and letting secrets pile up among the eyeshadow? Some of her Situations were standing or leaning about; there was one on the stairs with two women colliding in a revolving mirror-door which I thought I remembered. Or did I? It was disturbing to find that one travelled parsecs and decades only to discover yesterday still cluttering today. Yet I was comforted too, as I mooned among her shabby characteristic things to observe that she had not developed dynamically without me. She was what she had always been – though precisely what eluded me.

"Like a man hunting through the daily paper, looking for a lost faith," she commented, from a coiled position on a chair.

I never contradicted any statement she made which sounded like a quotation from a French play. I had established that firm rule early in our marriage, if marriage it had been.

"Let me look at you, Zbbeennaa, and see if you've become any more real inwardly with the years."

She flinched slightly as I took hold of her and scrutinised her.

"That old brown stain of human gaze".

"Are my eyes the same brown as John's?"

"Still a spiritual capitalist, thinking you can own colours and personalities?"

"Has John any meaning in your life?"

"Darling, your vocabulary is still infested with the same ratty little words – 'life', 'meaning', 'real' . . . They'll make you hyperthyroid if you go on using them."

"Have you found yourself, Zbbeennaa, or is your real self still floating in some desperate deep-freeze beyond the Milky Way?" I knew that that oblique reference to her infant mother-deprivation would still move her. She slapped me again, laughed, and said, "Since you are here and going through the old patter act, allow me to get you a meal."

Following her into the kitchen alcove, I said desperately (more desperately than I felt), "It's that old patter act we must talk about, Zbbeennaa. It got between us once before, remember? We could be soul-mates and the patter gets between us. Our talking heads are too clever. Can't we find silence and a real, real thing to share? You keep pretending to be like Melancholia, with a plastic core, and it isn't so."

"Now you think I'm giving you a plastic encore."

"Please don't be smart. Remember how it was before? Remember we once meant something to each other until we wisecracked it all away?" I took hold of her

arm, gently, as she dialled the food. My ulna lit again.

"You and your *Hemingway's Breath*, Laf-cadio . . . Are you really desperate for me?"

She turned a gentle sledgehammer gaze upon me, eyes like a lemur. Her sincerity was pure fake.

I tried to rein my emotions, speaking with slow seriousness. "Zbbeennaa, I mean this, and you must try to understand. I *am* desperate for you, and not just for you. I am desperate to regain myself. You are the one woman who has meaning in my life. You and my life are interdependent, and I wish that interdependence to have some weight, some value, to lend us both some . . . oh, some spiritual enrichment. Don't laugh! Living on Earth has become too expensive for most ordinary people, but it is difficult to live in artificial environments without becoming in some awful way shallow, feeling your own shallowness. I know that we two could have a meaningful relationship, *the* meaningful

relationship — oh God and Gumdrops, how hard it is to find the right words . . ."

"Keep going — at least you are finding plenty of them!"

"This flippancy, Zbbeennaa . . . please, our situation is tragic — a matter, a real matter of life and death!"

She laughed and made a smack in the air at me. "You play the tragedian, I prefer to stick to light comedy."

"You're robbing us now, this very minute, with your words."

"Oh, I know — way deep down inside, I'm shallow . . . You told me."

I recalled a song she used to sing (did she?): 'I know, I know, Lafcadio!'

I went away and rested my head on a wall. Internally, I yelled at her — clasp her by the throat as I did so — that she was killing spontaneity and me. Yet a part of me took sick and died at the truth of her words; I was enjoying playing a tragic role. Who said the truth will set you free? Truth castrates.

We sat opposite each other at a small foldaway table. The lighting was subdued. She looked beautiful if frowzy, smiled tenderly, many gente jokes, spoke of her new job as an actress, laughed away the past, laughed away herself.

It was the worst meal ever. Brown elsan soup. Meatballs that tasted like woodpecker stomachs with the wood left in. A suede-covered blanchange-thing of a green tint seen only on toy cars. Followed by a cheese quickly whipped up from rhino smegma. All washed down with a delicate white bile wine.

"What the hell went on between us, Zbbeennaa, back when?"

"You're welcome to stay here a few days, provided you take an interest in me and don't waste all your time searching for truth."

She looked amorous as she said it, and I saw how familiarly her breasts nodded in my direction; but I couldn't forbear saying, "You often sound so self-centred, yet you haven't really got a centre. Why stand me off? Let me come in and help you wake and find yourself. I know there's something in there, a cocoon, waiting to emerge in the shape of something beautiful."

"So young Lafcadio Hunter must have passed many days of his young deluded life," she said. She gazed into the sparkling bile of her glass and began one of those monologues I recalled with loathing. "He really had loved her, he protested. *'What the hell went on between us?'* Sly and private amid the gulches of the housing estate, he puts on his clothes each morning, thinking 'Every man his own valet and hero — who else knows what each day brings?' So he rides out to the office, another cowboy of the computer-society, a consumer who has been consumed . . ."

"We've all been consumed. Let's get out of it. Let's live differently, you and I. We have enough self-knowledge."

Hadn't I said that before, back whenever it was? I got up and stared moodily through the window at other houses out there in the unmitigated darkness of the solar system. In every house, a little desperate nexus of life, a couple, a family, a hermit, sitting staring at their wind-driven television sets, dreaming they were something different, somewhere different.

"There's a bird you'd like next door, Lafcadio. Pretty, younger than I. People don't have to be distant as history, if you make the effort!"

I turned to look at her, surprised at her change of tone. But it was another play. She was coming towards me with her sandals off, clutching her filmy skirts, a parody of the screen vamp.

"Oh, you sexy creature, let's shake Melancholia apart!" I said.

"How about a warm-up session first?"

"Baby, just to see you looking like that blows my thermometer!"

"Aw, I wanted to blow it for you! There's no justice."

"Who're you kidding? You, lady, are about to get your just desserts!"

"Cringing Cripes, don't desert me now, just when I need you."

"You got it coming to you in every sense of the word, baby, and then some . . ." We went into a huddle, laughing, and sank to the floor among a shower of kisses, some more accurately placed than others. After a little while, she let me tear the clothes off her. I really tore them. She still liked that. She still liked a lot of the things I liked — a lot of the things we used to like, if it had all happened as I remembered it.

We were resting, a couple of hours later, when the doorbell rang.

"Who's that likely to be at this time of



night?" I asked, scrambling for clothes.

"You're sure you haven't brought rabies to Melancholia? The militia are pretty strict about rabies."

She draped a gown over herself with some effect on the way to open the door. As soon as she had unlocked it, the door was thrust open and in came old brown Johnny from the café, with a gun in his hand, and his two café pals behind him, looking mean.

I stood up in some alarm. I was partly dressed.

"John, you idiot, what are you playing at?" Zbbeennaa exclaimed, but he pushed her roughly back and came towards me. His buddies stood in the doorway, looking heavy.

"It's you I want," he said. "What do you think you're doing here? What's your business with Zbbeennaa?"

"Get to hell out of here! I belong here and you don't." But I spoke without much conviction; it wasn't just that I seemed not to belong anywhere, but that the barrel of his gun had reminded me powerfully of what a coward I was.

"Zbbeennaa belongs to me," John said. "I'll give you exactly ten seconds to get to hell out of here."

I wasn't going to let him see I was chicken. I said, "You can kill me, but Zbbeennaa and I belong together. It's in the third law of thermodynamics."

"One," he said. "Two. Three." The bastard looked as if he had never heard of thermodynamics.

"You don't look the part, John," Zbbeennaa said. "Besides, I can see, if Lafcadio can't, that that's a dummy gun from your last production."

"Four," he said, looking foolish. Turning to her, he said bitterly, "What's with you that you —"

I crossed to him and gave him a hefty

thump in the chest. Don't ask me why not a smash in the face, or two knuckles up the nose, or a chop across the throat, or a knee in the crotch, or a stab with my heel on the instep. Things were too unreal for real stuff; I just thumped his chest. It felt decidedly hollow.

The two guys in the doorway did nothing, beside peering at each other in embarrassment.

John coughed and looked hurt. "I ought to kill you —," he said.

"Come on, John," one of his buddies said. "The serial starts in ten minutes. We can rough him up another time."

They left, three of them. It was a fumbled exit, and the wind blew in strongly before they were gone.

"It's the serial in ten minutes," Zbbeennaa said, closing the door. "I'd forgotten."

She went and switched on the TV as if nothing had happened. I poured myself a voltmeter kick, which was all she had available.

"That guy's a madman!" I said. "A cotsacking madman! They used to arrest guys like that where I come from, and open up their heads to see what was going on inside! Don't you *mind* three dumb drugs bursting into your place at midnight and trying to shoot your lover? Or maybe it happens every night?"

I observed, belatedly, that she was bending over the TV set, trying to hide her laughter from me. Grasping her shoulder, I turned her round, whereupon she immediately collapsed on me, burying her face in my chest, pinching my cheek.

"What's so funny?" Although I enjoyed the taste of her hair, I forced her head up.

She put four fingers over her mouth to hush herself. "I saved you from certain if

fictitious death, didn't I? How can you be angry with me?"

"What's so funny?"

"You can kill me, but Zbbeennaa and I belong together" . . . Your marvellous sense of melodrama . . .

"It may sound like melodrama to you but it's the bitter truth to me — more proof, I suppose, that we live in different universes."

When she arched an eyebrow at me, it had a well-remembered effect on me: I lost the ability to speak. Though many might not have called her beautiful — I sometimes thought her ugly myself — there was something about the way the light hairs grew on her face, and her eyebrows and eyelashes especially, which gave me a frisson of delight almost akin to vertigo. It might be accounted a blemish in Zbbeennaa to have facial hair at all — she was full of blemishes — but the little there was of it formed an important part of her attraction. It was still so mad about the damned woman that I missed what she was saying.

"Now you're doing your love-struck act," she said. She slapped me. "I'm going to watch the serial."

As she settled before her cube, I said, "You realise how trivial you are? For how many years have I sought you? And when I find you, you sink before your TV set to watch some miserable serial!"

"This is no miserable serial. It is directed by John Widows, whom you have just met, and I play a small part in the episode tonight."

"Different universes, you see!" I placed myself between her and the cube.

"You complain of that. You always did. I never did. Why shouldn't we belong to different universes? Isn't that just a corny way of saying we don't all feel alike? You

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SPECIAL EFFECTS AND THE SCIENCE FICTION FILM

By John Brosnan

Special effects personify the basic appeal of the cinema – the actual creation of illusions. In the following article John Brosnan, whose book about the development of cinematic special effects (Movie Magic, McDonalds Ltd) will be appearing in April, describes the importance of special effects in relation to the production of science fiction films.

The big boom in science fiction films that began in 1950 meant that all the Hollywood special effects men could give a loud sigh of relief. Until that time it was beginning to seem as if most of them were fast on their way to becoming redundant. During the 2nd World War, when every studio was busily trying to produce vast scenes of military destruction within the confines of a sound stage, special effects of all kinds had flourished, but after 1946, when location filming came into vogue, most film makers were frantically trying to avoid releasing anything that looked as if it had been filmed in a studio. As a result the miniature specialists and the optical experts found that there was little demand for their skills. But the sudden popularity of science fiction films changed all that. Once again the sound stage became indispensable, and so too did the effects men. The major difference was that now, instead of having to recreate the real world, as they did in war films with their model ships and planes and back-projected scenery, their task with science fiction films was to create the *unreal*.

Appropriately enough the man who began the sf film boom was a former special effects expert who had turned producer. His name was George Pal and he had originally been famous for his 'Puppetoons' – short films that had featured dolls animated by stop-motion photography. Pal, who had been born in Hungary, had been financed by Paramount Pictures who hoped that the Puppetoons would be competition for the Disney type of animated film. But by 1947 rising production costs had made the Puppetoons too expensive to produce and Pal began to explore other areas of film production. The first result of this was *The Great Rupert* (1949). Basically a live-action film starring Jimmy Durante, it also featured a squirrel who was the Rupert of the title. Rupert was actually an animated model but he appeared so realistic that many people thought he was an extremely well-trained live squirrel.

Pal's next film was *Destination Moon*, made in 1950. It was based on Robert Heinlein's novel *Rocketship Galileo* and Heinlein himself was invited to be a technical adviser on the film, along with rocket expert Hermann Oberth (who had worked on Fritz Lang's 1929 production of *Woman in the Moon*). The plot of *Destination Moon* bore little resemblance to Heinlein's book and when seen today it has dated rather badly but the special effects are still impressive. In charge of the mechanical effects was Lee Zavitz, a Hollywood veteran who has worked on many famous films, including *Gone with the Wind*. Zavitz, incidentally, trained under Louis Witte – the man who invented the term 'special effects'.

Among Zavitz's tasks during the making of *Destination Moon* was to show four men floating beside the rocketship while out in space. To achieve this required a large number of wires and safety lines. In some scenes thirty-six wires were used along with dozens of safety lines, none of which could be allowed to show up on the screen. One of Zavitz's assistants spent most of his time painting the wires with a sponge attached to the end of a long pole to prevent them from becoming shiny.

The construction of the rocketship control-room was also a major problem. Heinlein wanted it to be as realistic as possible but this meant difficulties for the cameraman who was restricted in his camera set-ups. This was overcome by building the control room like a jigsaw puzzle – every section of it could be removed when required so that the camera had access. A factor which created further problems was the discovery that the set would have to be tilted on its side to enable the crew members to appear to float horizontally, via the wires, for certain scenes. For this to be possible Zavitz and his team had to design and build a special rig three stories high to allow the control to be rotated. Carpenters built a platform around it and the camera was mounted on a giant boom. The latter was so impressive that Cecil B DeMille visited the studio just to see it.

A full-scale rocket, 150 feet high, was used for the scenes prior to the take-off. It was taken in segments to the Mojave desert and erected along with a gantry crane. But when the rocket actually takes off in the film it is the work of the animation department. Not surprisingly, considering Pal's previous experience with three-dimen-

sional animation, these scenes are very well executed. In fact the five minutes of animation took longer to film than the eighty-five minutes of live action.

Destination Moon was a huge success and other science fiction films soon followed it (one hastily produced imitation, *Rocket Ship XM*, actually appeared on release a few weeks before Pal's film). Pal quickly began work on another sf project, this time based on Philip Wylie and Edwin Balmer's book *When Worlds Collide*. The plot concerned the destruction of the world by a wandering star and the escape of a group of people who travel by spaceship from the doomed Earth to a planet that orbits the invading star. The highlights in the special effects, and in the film itself, occur with the construction and take-off of the spaceship, and the various catastrophes that take place as the star nears Earth. Of the scenes of destruction the most memorable is the one of New York being swamped by a giant tidal wave. For this, eight blocks of New York were painstakingly recreated in miniature within a Paramount sound stage, some of the buildings being as tall as 6 feet. Supervising the effects was Gordon Jennings who had been in charge of the effects department at Paramount since the early Nineteen Thirties. For his work on *When Worlds Collide* he won an Oscar, one of the several he received during his career.

In the same year, 1951, another sf film was released that was to influence greatly the trend of sf films for years to come. It was called *The Thing* and was based on John Campbell Jnr's story *Who Goes There?* An effective thriller in itself it unfortunately instigated a flood



The model rocket ship used in Fritz Lang's 1929 classic, *WOMEN IN THE MOON* (UFA)

of low-quality invading-monsters-from-outer-space films. But however artistically dubious they were, they at least provided the special effects men with plenty of challenges and the chance to produce some visual fireworks... if the budget permitted it. One of the best of these from the special effects' point of view was Pal's *War of the Worlds* (1953). This film took special effects from mere star status and made it into a super star. This is demonstrated by the break-up of the budget: \$1,400,000 for the effects and \$600,000 for the live action.

The effects in *War of the Worlds* were once again handled by Gordon Jennings and they are perhaps his greatest achievement. Though Pal liked the original description of the Martian war machines – tower-like devices that marched about on three stilt legs – he thought they should be more modern in appearance for his film. So he decided that they should move on pillars of electricity and instructed Jennings to prepare a prototype of the model. Jennings and his men worked for a month before they had something to show Pal. They had built a manta ray-shaped machine, 42 inches in diameter, out of copper and to achieve the effect of the machine being supported by beams of electricity, thin wires had been extended from the bottom of the machine to the floor of the set. Overhead wires were used to feed one million volts of electricity into



From Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (Courtesy MGM)

the wire legs which resulted in a very spectacular display of sparks. Pal was naturally impressed with the result but thought that it was much too dangerous. He feared that the use of such a high voltage might lead to the accidental electrocution of one of the technicians or to a fire within the studio. Regretfully the idea was abandoned and a safer alternative devised. This involved the machines being apparently supported on semi-transparent beams of 'force', which were superimposed onto the film later with an optical printer.

The models of the war machines were beautifully designed and look very effective in the finished picture. Unfortunately each machine was supported by fifteen wires and occasionally these can be seen on the screen. The wires were necessary, not only to support the machines, but also to feed electricity and electronic signals to control the snake-like appendage that contained the heat ray. The latter, also designed by Jennings, consisted of a red plastic tip behind which was a small fan and an incandescent bulb. When the fan spun it alternately blocked and passed light to the red tip. The result was an ominous pulsating effect which, when coupled with the ticking soundtrack, was quite chilling. Jennings and his team won another Oscar for their work but unfortunately it was to be Jennings' last film – he died later the same year of a heart attack.

Alien invaders and monsters of all shapes and sizes followed the Martian war machines out of Hollywood and onto the world's cinema screens. Among the best were those created and animated by Ray Harryhausen. Harryhausen, inspired by Willis H O'Brien – the man responsible for *King Kong*, specializes in three-dimensional animation created by stop-motion photography. The basic technique is the same as that used by George Pal in his Puppets but O'Brien and Harryhausen went a step further by combining animated models with live action. *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953) was the first film in which Harryhausen had complete charge of the effects (he had previously worked on *Mighty Joe Young* in 1949 with O'Brien) and was the film that began the prehistoric monster cycle. The formula usually involved some prehistoric creature being awakened by an atomic blast and then going on a rampage which caused the destruction of the odd city or two before succumbing to modern technology (very occasionally it was modern technology who succumbed and the monsters who won, as in *Gorgo*, 1960). *The Beast*... was a relatively impressive film, unlike some monster films that followed, thanks to Harryhausen's unique skills and the direction of Eugene Lourie.

Other Harryhausen monsters included a giant octopus (with only six tentacles – the budget wouldn't run to eight) which featured in *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (1955) and a strange creature that resembled a dinosaur with a feline face in *Twenty Million Miles to Earth* (1957) – this evil-looking monster began only a few inches tall and grew steadily larger as the picture progressed.

But Hollywood soon had competition in the monster department... from Japan, surprisingly enough. In 1954 Toho Studios released a film called *Gojira* which had a similar plot to *The Beast*... except that it was a Japanese city demolished by the monster instead of an American one. Apparently American audiences preferred to see Japanese cities demolished because when the picture was released in America, along with some extra footage featuring an American actor (Raymond Burr), and with its title altered to *Godzilla*, it was soon a big success.

Gojira, or *Godzilla*, was the creation of the late Japanese special effects' expert Eiji Tsuburaya. Tsuburaya's monsters, unlike O'Brien's or Harryhausen's, were not models animated by stop-motion photography (ie a stationary model manipulated by hand by the animator who exposes a single frame of film on each separate movement) but were created either by actors in costume or by mechanical miniatures. These were filmed by high-speed cameras which slowed down the rate of movement on the screen and added to the realism. Also the Japanese technicians excel in building miniature sets which gave



A technician works on a model for the Canadian documentary UNIVERSE, a film which inspired Kubrick to make 2001 (Courtesy National Film Board of Canada)



Ap publicity composite from THE MYSTERIANS (Courtesy Toho Productions)

these films a high-quality appearance that belied their relatively low budgets.

Nearer to the essence of magazine science fiction were the 'space' films made during the Fifties, such as *This Island Earth* (1955) and *Forbidden Planet* (1956). The latter still ranks as one of the best science fiction films ever made and was a special effects *tour de force*. The production was designed by Cedric Gibbons and Arthur Lonergan and the effects were supervised by Arnold Gillespie, the dean of Hollywood special effects men (during his career he worked on almost 600 films).

The film begins with a sequence showing a flying saucer from Earth hurtling through space and entering an alien solar system. Here the eclipse of an enormous red sun is seen with the space ship silhouetted by the corona – a breathtaking spectacle which is almost equal to the astronomical simulations in the later classic 2001: A Space Odyssey. The saucer then lands on the planet Altair IV, a sequence achieved by some expert model work, but as the dust settles there is a cut to a full-scale mock-up of the saucer filmed within an MGM sound stage.

The alien scenery which surrounds the saucer is actually an enormous painted cyclorama... 350 feet in length. No sooner have the crewmen disembarked than they are met by the film's deadpan comic relief – a robot called Robby. The robot was a very elaborate mechanism. More than two months of trial and error labour were needed to install the 2,600 feet of electrical wiring that operated all



A scene from the Japanese epic *THE MYSTERIANS* displaying the talents of special effects expert, the late Eiji Tsuburaya (Courtesy Toho Productions)



Robby the Robot, star of both *FORBIDDEN PLANET* and *THE INVISIBLE BOY* (Courtesy MGM)

his flashing lights, spinning antennae and various complicated gizmos that could be seen moving within his transparent dome-shaped head. Robby was so expensive that MGM felt obliged to use him again in another feature film, *The Invisible Boy* (1957). Just who had the unattractive task of being *inside* Robby during the making of the films was never released.

The special effects became even more breath-taking as the film progressed. Beneath the surface of Altair IV are the remains of a great civilization – giant machines that are still in operation. The Earthmen are taken on a guided tour over part of this vast complex and one stunning shot shows them as tiny figures standing on a catwalk that spans a huge shaft in which massive pieces of machinery are moving up and down, accompanied by an awesome display of electricity. Of course the shaft and machinery were part of a miniature set, though a relatively large one – about 30 feet high and 10 feet wide at the top. An extra wide camera lens was used to exaggerate the perspective, making it seem to plunge for miles. The men on the catwalk were making into the shot of the miniature after being filmed on a full-scale section of the ramp, built in the studio, from a camera positioned as high as possible to make them seem tiny.

An important part of the film concerns the activities of an invisible creature who makes several attacks upon the Earthmen and their spaceship. For most of the time only its footprints can be seen but during one sequence, when the creature is bombarded by the ray guns of the crew, a fiery red outline appears. If the image seems to remind one of something out of a Walt Disney cartoon that's not surprising as it was created by animator Joshua Meador, who was on loan from the Walt Disney Studio.

The greatest space film made to date is, of course, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It is also the greatest special effects film ever made. Never before had special effects been presented so lavishly, or so successfully, and never before had the potential of miniatures been so fully realized. The models that glided and soared through *2001* were so meticulously constructed, so skilfully photographed and so ingeniously complemented by director Stanley Kubrick's choice of music, that special effects will never be the same again.

Stanley Kubrick had long possessed a reputation for being a perfectionist in film-making circles so it was no surprise that he should bring this same stamp to bear in his attitude to special effects. British effects veteran Wally Veevers described what it was like to work on the picture with Kubrick: "To start in the industry as an apprentice on *Things to Come* and to finish, more or less, on a picture like *2001* was a wonderful thing. Kubrick is a wonderful director to work with but terribly demanding. I reckon of the two years I worked with him he took five years of my life. He drained *everything* out of you. I, and



A typical movie monster (from *THE GREEN SLIME*)

most of the other boys on the picture, were working day and night. Kubrick would come and say, for example, '... I've got a thing here, it's a diamond shape with eight facets and it's rotating ... now I want to be able to track in on it and on each facet there have to be three pictures merging into each other. Now, how are you going to do it, Wally?' And I would have to work out how to do it as quickly as possible.

"I had all my models running on tracks so that everything would be dead smooth. The model of the spaceship *Discovery*, which was 54 feet long (a smaller model was used for some shots) moved along a track that was 150 feet in length. It took 4½ hours to move along the track and we had to shoot it more than once, for matting purposes, and it had to travel at exactly the same speed each time." To matte in the shots of the spaceship crewmen, who were to be seen through the various windows in the model, involved a mixture of old and new techniques. "We used no conventional travelling mattes at all," said Kubrick, "because I feel that it is impossible to get original-looking quality with travelling mattes." (A travelling matte is a complicated photographic process by which two or more image components are combined on one negative.)

Instead, a shot would be made of the spaceship moving along its track all properly lit but with the window areas blacked out. Then, when it had completed its passage it would be set up again at the beginning, the film would be wound back and another identical shot made. ... but this time the exterior of the model would be covered with black velvet and a scene of the interior live action would be projected onto a glossy white card exactly filling the window area. Basically this was a throw-back to the matting techniques of the silent film cameramen who also used to combine different images on a single piece of film within their cameras.

"Everything was motorised in those scenes," said Veevers. "For example, in the sequence where the moon ship descends into the underground moon base – which was 20 feet deep, by the way – a projector was being lowered parallel to the ship at exactly the same speed. It was projecting the scenes of the people who appeared to be looking out. Both motors had to be perfectly synchronised otherwise the shots would be ruined."

2001: A Space Odyssey lifted the field of special effects onto a whole new plane of achievement. It showed what could be done, providing one had a director with the drive and genius of Stanley Kubrick, a team of top effects experts and, most important, a considerable amount of money. The best special effects man in the world can't produce realistic results if his budget doesn't permit it. Unfortunately, with the film industry in its present grim state, it may be a long time before we see the like of *2001* again.

the Artist in Science Fiction

By Pat Hornsey

Bruce Pennington. Born: 10 May 1944. Studied: Bockenham School of Art, 1960-64. SF artist; creator of such sf paperback covers as Brian Aldiss' *Airs of Earth* (New English Library Edition, August 1972), Poul Anderson's *Satan's World* (Corgi Edition, April 1973), Frank Herbert's *Dune Messiah* (New English Library Edition, September 1972) and *The Green Brain* (New English Library Edition, July 1973).

Science fiction cover illustration is fast becoming an art-form in itself, and one of the leading exponents in this field is Bruce Pennington, whose work over the past three years has developed a following of its own.

Pennington has been working on sf covers for six years now. His introduction to the world of science fiction came in 1967 when he was commissioned by New English Library to illustrate their paperback edition of Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*. At that time he had no



Bruce Pennington's first science fiction cover, for Heinlein's *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND*, published by New English Library in 1967.

particular interest in science fiction and continued illustrating what he terms 'dreary historical novels and westerns' for another year before producing a series of striking illustrations for a collection of Ray Bradbury paperbacks published by Corgi. Notable among these were *Dandelion Wine*, *Illustrated Man* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Soon after, he created cover illustrations for *The Airs of Earth*, *The Canopy of Time*, *Space, Time and Nathaniel* and *The Dark Light Years*, a quartet of stories by Brian Aldiss re-issued by New

English Library in May 1971. It was these covers which established him as an essentially sf artist and from then on his work began to develop a refinement of



THE CANOPY OF TIME, one of the covers which established Pennington as an essentially sf artist

style quite unique in paperback cover art. The covers of paperbacks such as *The Pastel City*, *Indoctinaire* (both New English Library) and *The Year's Best Science Fiction No 6* (Sphere) are typical examples of his current style.

Today there is growing interest in his work and he receives fan mail from as far away as Australia and South Africa:

"I get all kinds of letters. Some simply ask for larger reproductions of my paintings but others are quite lengthy and interesting - people are interested to know how their interpretation of the cover corresponds with mine."

Pennington's work has a very distinctive quality about it. His use of colour alone sets him apart from other science fiction artists. Most of his paintings are done in the same medium: gouache colour is applied to stretched watercolour paper and as the work progresses a variety of inks and varnishes are incorporated to add luminosity and depth. An illustration is generally conceived as a rough patchwork of colours and tones and gradually becomes resolved and clarified towards the end - a simple analogy would be that of a blurred image viewed through a distorted lens which, as the lens is adjusted, gradually brings the subject into focus.

Science fiction illustration is, he finds, an excellent vehicle for expressing his imaginative ideas and there is no doubt that, given

complete license, he would give full rein to his obsession with the bizarre and supernatural:



Cover for NEL edition of *INDOCTRINAIRE*, painted in 1971

"For many years now, I have become increasingly interested in all kinds of phenomena - religious apparitions, miracles, aerial prodigies, UFOs - in fact most things which defy rational explanation. All these are to be found in the one book which most inspires me - the Bible. When read in the context of the Centuries of Nostradamus and the much later books of Charles Fort, the Old and New Testaments took on a new dimension for me. Although I am not overtly religious, the accurate fulfilment of past prophecies has made me re-examine the Bible in a new light. I discount the clumsy theories of popular writers who suggest that angels are astronauts from other worlds. I believe them to be beings of a much higher order than mere technologically advanced humans."

Pennington's own private drawings and paintings abound with the visions which haunt him, particularly that of the Apocalypse. Armoured devils swarm out of sulphurous smoke clouds; echelons of flying saucers streak across the horizon leaving hellfire and desolation in their wake; fiery

beings climb city walls like supermen carrying the 'elect' to safety as the earth blazes like an inferno. Paintings such as these are just some in his Armageddon series. Similar visions creep into some of his sf illustrations (typical examples being those for the covers of *Earthworks*, *New Worlds 6* and *The Green Brain*) and he finds this is something he must guard against for fear of misinterpreting a book.

Although he would not accredit influence by any one artist, he has always been intrigued by fantastic art and, not surprisingly, Bosch and Goya come high on his list:

"There are so many artists I admire - Turner, Martin, Fuseli, Dadd and, of course, Blake. The so-called Great Artists leave me cold though. I am more influenced by modern photography and the startling effects it can produce."



Typical example of Pennington's style: cover illustration for Frank Herbert's *THE GREEN BRAIN*

Regarding his future, Pennington is non-committal. He would like more time to develop his own work on a much larger scale and feels that oils on canvas would be a more dynamic medium for the type of work he now hopes to produce. When asked how long he will continue to create covers for science fiction novels he simply says, "For as long as I have the time to do them."



Bruce Pennington

MIKE BUSSELLE

"MASTERS OF THE PIT" BY MICHAEL MOORCOCK. PAINTING BY E. H. CLIFTON, DEY.

SCIENCE FICTION
NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY MONTHLY







"THE PASTEL CITY" BY JOHN H. HARRISON. PAINTING BY BRUCE PENNINGTON.

"SPACE, TIME AND NATHANIEL" BY BRIAN ALDISS, PAINTING BY BRUCE PENNINGTON

SCIENCE FICTION
NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY MONTHLY



SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY SHORT STORY COMPETITION

NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY, as part of its policy of encouraging writers, is offering prizes totalling £400 for new and previously unpublished science fiction short stories in English. There will be seven prize winners—Best overall entry: £100. The two best UK entries: £50 each. The two best Commonwealth entries: £50 each. The two best foreign entries: £50 each.

In addition to the above, authors of manuscripts regarded as being suitable for publication will be offered publishing contracts.

All entries should be sent to The Editor, SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY, New English Library Ltd, Barnard's Inn, Holborn, London EC1N 2JR, to arrive not later than 31 March 1974. Envelopes must be marked *SFM Short Story Award* in the top left hand corner.



JAN PARKER

Rules

1. The Science Fiction Monthly Short Story Award of 1974/75 is open to all residents of the UK, Eire and the British Commonwealth as constituted on 1.1.1947.
2. Entrants must submit manuscripts to NEL, to arrive not later than 31 March 1974. All manuscripts received will be acknowledged, but NEL cannot accept responsibility for their safety or their return to the authors.
3. Manuscripts should be of Science Fiction stories of 2,500 to 6,000 words written in English. They must be previously unpublished and solely the work of the entrant, who warrants that the submission of the manuscript and its offer to NEL for publication does not infringe any prior rights of any third party, whether contractual or otherwise. All manuscripts should be typed (in double

- spacing, on one side only of plain white paper) and submitted in duplicate, in order that they may be read by more than one judge simultaneously.
4. Each entry will be carefully considered by a panel of judges, including the Managing Director of New English Library and the Editor of Science Fiction Monthly.
5. The judges' decision relating to the award and the prize monies must be accepted as final.
6. Winners of the seven prizes will be announced not later than 30 June 1974 and entrants will be notified by post as soon as possible after that date.
7. Each successful entrant will be sent a copy of NEL's standard form of contract. On award of the prize the winner will grant to NEL full world publication rights (the form of publication being left to NEL's discretion) on the terms of

- that standard contract. The award will be paid immediately and in full on signature of the contract.
8. Apart from being considered for one of the seven prizes, all entrants of manuscripts regarded as being of sufficient merit will be offered contracts for publication at the discretion of NEL. If the offer is accepted by the entrant the story will be published at a future date chosen by NEL.
9. No manuscript entered for this competition may be offered elsewhere until after the panel of judges has made its award and for six months thereafter, pending NEL's decision to offer a contract to the entrant.
10. This award is not open to employees, their parents, spouses or children, of New English Library, Times Mirror or any subsidiary of Times Mirror.

The crime was sexual promiscuity; the punishment was probation. Now she walked to the courthouse for her appeal, a woman naked.

It was midday, and the streets of the city were crowded. Mistress L— walked at a steady pace, knowing that the court would not admit her before the appointed time, and that the distance of the walk had been carefully measured so that if all went well she should not have to wait more than a few minutes at the court. She knew also that if she ran she would only attract more attention to herself, even as she wanted to shorten the agony and humiliation of this obligatory display of her moral weakness. Already she had attracted a small crowd of men who were following her; she had no way of knowing what their intentions were, but she hoped that all they wanted was to look at her.

If the worst happened — and it was not unlikely — she knew that there would be no one to help her, even though her brother and his friend were walking a few yards behind. There was no penalty for the rape of a woman naked, but the punishment was severe for anyone who tried to protect her. A convicted promiscuous woman had by her actions admitted to her consent.

Six months she had survived as a woman naked; not by good fortune alone, but also by the care of sympathetic friends. She did not envy those women who were forced to pass their probation in the cities; in this she had been lucky, even though it had been those friends who had inadvertently initiated the crime.

Remorse was long past, and she sought now only a return to normal life. The shame had been temporarily revived by this day, but on the whole she had learned to live with it. The fear persisted, the terror of sexual violation. She had grown up in this society where morals were legislated — for women at least — and accepted its standards, but there could be no growing accustomed to the daily fear of assault that had been hers during the probation. The law protected those women who were chaste, monogamous, faithful to their husbands; it punished severely those who strayed.

Sometimes during her probation she had thought uselessly of the nature of her crime.

Just three men . . . but the number was irrelevant. Cognizance of the number involved did nothing to lessen the severity of her plight, but it had indeed been just three men, two if she discounted her husband. The first of her extra-marital crimes had been a brief, casual acquaintanceship, consummated and concluded during one night. After that she had worried, knowing the penalty for adultery, but with the passing of time she had allowed it to recede into insignificance. It had been a long time ago; four years, five?

She had now covered about half of the distance to the courthouse. The law laid down that on the day of the appeal a woman naked must cover the distance from the probation registry office to the court, alone and on foot. There could be no evasion of this: cameras monitored the whole route. If she deviated from the route — in fact or in spirit — her appeal might not be heard, the probation could be extended indefinitely.

Behind her, the small crowd of men followed in silence.

About two years ago she and her husband had entered a new circle of friends. Her husband had a small talent as a painter, and he had hoped that by meeting people connected with the professional literary and artistic world he might gain recognition. The people they had met styled themselves as free-thinkers, intellectual radicals in a society where conformity was fashionable. They

derided the moralistic laws, claimed the privileges of humanism and self-expression . . . and in their company both she and her husband had allowed themselves to believe that the laws may indeed have no real effect.

It was in this mood of affected radicalism that she had met the third man. One evening, while the others were debating some minor political issue, he had taken her to another room and given her some illicitly-distilled liquor. Later, he seduced her, and afterwards she rationalized her actions as a radical statement against the repressive laws.

Within a week she was arrested.

She came to a street intersection, and had to wait by the kerb until the traffic allowed her to cross. At her side was a pillar bearing one of the court television cameras. The crowd of men waited behind her; they did not come too close — for which she was thankful — but she wondered if they were waiting for some more opportune moment to close in on her.

As she crossed the street she passed a group of women. They glanced at her, then looked deliberately away. No sympathy, not even a flicker of understanding. She wanted to call out to them to help her, perhaps to walk with her as far as the court, but there was never any help for a woman naked.

surprise he had been willing and able.

Someone he knew had a large house in the country, some fifty miles from the centre of the city. It would be possible for her to serve her sentence there.

Once away from the city she felt much safer. She still had to bare herself in public, and for the first few weeks was the centre of considerable local hostility, but she felt — correctly, as it turned out — that in the countryside there was less chance of being attacked.

Her brother heard of her plight and visited her several times. He could help her no more than anyone else, but he provided her with company.

Towards the end of the probation a new frustration arose in her: she had lived all her life in the city, and the sight of the countryside beyond the grounds of the house tantalized her with its beauty. Just once, she went for a walk with her brother, but a woman naked is recognized everywhere.

So the probation passed. No-one attacked her, her body remained inviolate.

On the last night of the probation she returned to her city apartment with her brother and his friend, and in the morning she reported to the probation registry office.

From there, the three-mile walk to the courthouse.

A WOMAN

While waiting for the trial it had become clear to her that one of the group of her radical friends must have been a police informer. It was this knowledge which frightened her, for when her husband left her she realized she was on her own. As she had no conception of whom the informer might be, she dared not ask the friends for help. During the trial, one of them appeared in her defence and the prosecution evidence was given in secret. Such was the privilege of the male.

After the verdict was pronounced and she was given the temporary name Mistress L—, she returned to her apartment and for a week tried to carry on a normal life. She stayed inside, ordering food by telephone. She felt the emptiness of the flat, her husband and all his possessions gone. It was too difficult, too lonely. She could not leave without baring herself and knew that if she tried, and was caught, her punishment could become permanent. Every fallout in the corridor outside became that of a violator, every man who paused for more than a moment beyond her window became a potential rapist, the streets of the city became in her mind a maze of darkened alleyways and lurking shadows.

Finally, with no one else to turn to, she took off her clothes and drove over to the home of her nearest friend, taking the chance that it was not he who had been the informer. In fear of some further kind of betrayal she asked his help . . . and to her

She realized that some of the men behind her were talking. This was a hopeful sign. Her brother had told her that he and his friend would do whatever they could to keep the inevitable crowd from becoming a mob; silence, he said, was dangerous. If an attack began some men would be self-conscious in a crowd of others . . . but they would be in a minority. In silence, there would be tacit approval by the majority of any direct movement towards her.

Now she heard a few remarks about her body, and they were in general good-natured. She knew that her brother would be trying to initiate a verbal response to her appearance.

A man stepped forward from the crowd, and walked for a few paces at her side. He glanced at her, appraising her body, but she stared back at him to meet his gaze.

At once, he looked away and turned from her, heading into a shop doorway.

All her life she had lived with an awareness of the realities of sexual vulnerability. As a child she had been taught to be demure and modest, to respect her father and brother, to beware of men she did not know. Later, she had followed her mother's advice and only mixed socially in large groups of people. She was not unusual in this: as she made her own friends and talked to them she discovered that they had been brought up in the same fashion. Only

as she became an adult in her own right did she fully understand the reasons behind this; that men outnumbered women several times over, that although by nature of her sex she was accorded special treatment in society, it was only so long as she lived by society's rules.

There was none so sweet as an innocent woman; there was none so guilty as one who erred.

At last the courthouse was in sight, and still the crowd of men behind her remained small. She wondered if they were the same men who had been following her from the beginning, or whether the number had stayed constant while individual men had come and gone. As she had done so often before she thanked the chance that had allocated her a daytime hearing. The newspapers, although not too galling about the fate of women naked, often published news-items reporting the rape or murder of women naked on their way to night-time probationary appeals.

Until her own arrest, she had taken not much notice of the affairs of convicted women, assuming that it was a fate that would never befall her, but on the realization of her own prospects she became aware of

crowd he stayed at her side, trying not to appear to be with her. That too was covered by the law; women naked were supposed to report to the court unaccompanied, though she surmised that few women took that risk if there was someone willing to help them clandestinely.

She noticed that standing beside the door was another girl. She was very young, hardly out of her teens. Naked, she faced the wall, trying to shield her body from the hands that reached out to touch her.

The girl saw Mistress L— approaching, and looked at her with relief . . . but at that moment the door opened and a man in a uniform appeared.

"You're next," he said to the girl.

He helped her through the door, and Mistress L— moved forward.

"What about me?"

"After her. You're early."

The door closed, and Mistress L— turned to face the crowd.

She discovered that by staring at the men's faces she could avoid provoking them. By her side her brother stood facing her, trying to behave like the other men yet standing covertly in their way.

and up at the crowd of men who were moving in on her.

"But—"

"In!"

Her wrist was seized and she was dragged through the doorway. As the door closed she heard the men shouting, and over it the girl was screaming.

"What happened?"

"She lost her appeal. This way."

She was taken along a short corridor towards a flight of steps, and at the bottom of these was a small ante-room. The doorman showed her what was inside.

"If you win your appeal, you dress in here."

"What if I don't?"

"I'll conduct you safely to the exit."

Inside the room were several racks of clothing. Each of the garments was a one-piece, grey dungaree, made of rough, badly-cut material.

He nodded towards the steps. "Up there."

She ascended them slowly. At the top was a narrow platform raised high over the courtroom. There was a narrow rail, and she gripped it.

The court of appeal was assembled below. The courtroom was approximately fan-shaped, with the raised platform on which she stood at the apex. There was none of the air of formality she had anticipated: the seats were facing her, arranged in the manner of an auditorium, and people moved about, some talking quietly in the background. The first few rows of seats were packed tight with members of the public, and immediately behind these was an enclosed section in which sat the various court officials and dignitaries. Beyond this were more seats, but not all of these were occupied.

Everyone present was male.

Two lights were concentrated on the platform, and she blinked in the sudden dazzle. In the judiciary section a man stood up and spoke almost inaudibly over the background noise.

"The court of appeal is in session—"

Slowly, silence fell.

"The court of appeal is in session to hear representations from the woman currently known as Mistress L—. Would the appellant identify herself."

"I am Mistress L—," she said, and she realized that on one side of the courtroom recording-machines were turning.

"Very well. I am your counsel. To establish your appeal I have to obtain from you a statement. You are reminded that the oath you swore at your previous trial is still binding. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir."

"The nature of your appeal is in the form of a sworn confession. You must relate to the court the details of your crime. Your account will be compared with the sworn testimony of the prosecution witnesses, and if it in any way differs you will be called upon, under cross-examination, to account for the discrepancies. If you are not able to satisfy the court as to the authenticity of your confession, your appeal will not be upheld. Do you have any questions?"

"Sir . . . what degree of detail does the court require?"

"Your statement should be complete to every last detail. Your every thought, move and desire. You must describe minutely the experiences you had, and how you reacted to them. Leave out no detail, however trivial it might seem to be." He sat down. "Please now begin."

Mistress L— was the focus of all attention. She opened her mouth and started the account of her crimes. The rape had begun.

UNNAMED

by Christopher Priest

just how much she really did know about the punishment, and what was likely to happen to the offenders.

She knew, too, what form the present appeal would take.

She glanced over her shoulder. The crowd had mainly dispersed, perhaps understanding where she was heading. She saw her brother and his friend, walking along about ten yards behind her in a group of about a dozen other men. The worst appeared to be over. Now she was within a few hundred yards of the courthouse she felt less conspicuous, had grown accustomed to the feeling of walking naked through the streets.

The other women naked, she wondered, did they too grow accustomed to it? Or did they all stay behind closed doors, as she had done?

The court building stood in a small square, the centre of which was laid out in the form of a garden with many overhanging trees. She passed through these, leaving behind the sound of the traffic and most of the crowds. Once more, she looked behind: in addition to her brother and his friend, only five men now followed her.

The entrance to the appeal-court was at the side of the building, and she turned the corner and walked down the narrow passageway. Here she discovered that a crowd of about forty men were clustered about the door.

Her brother stepped forward, walked at her side. As she pushed her way through the

They seemed not greatly interested in her. Perhaps she was older than they would have liked her to be, or feared the consequences of an attack on her here on the steps of the courthouse. Why then were they here at all? Simple voyeurism? A few stood away from her, talking in small groups. She hated all of them, seeing them for what they were: the men who had no place in society, yet who took advantage of the rejects from that society. She knew that if they decided to attack her, here or anywhere else, she would die. There were too many of them, and they were not organized in any way: they would scrap and kick for her body, and in the confusion they would destroy her.

But they seemed not greatly interested in her, and the minutes passed uneventfully.

The door opened and the man appeared once more.

"Name?"

"I'm known as Mistress L—."

"That's right. You're next. Wait here."

The door closed again, and she realized that the men in the crowd were looking expectantly at it.

Another minute passed, and then the door opened again. The young girl appeared, still naked.

The doorman thrust her roughly down the steps, and she fell.

"Come in, you," he said to Mistress L—.

She looked down at where the girl lay,

NEWS

By PENNY GRANT

Perhaps you've been an sf fan for many years, perhaps you picked up your first Heinlein last week – either way we hope we have something for you on this page. If you're an old hand, we hope to fill you in on conventions, fanzines, events, anything which may have escaped your eagle eye. If you're new, and don't know what's in store, we'll give you some idea of the size and scope of the sf world – then it's up to you . . .

By the way, if you already belong to any local organizations, clubs, etc, publish a fanzine, or have anything which you would like mentioned, send us full details and we will do our best to include an item on it.

TYNECON 74 This year's Easter Science Fiction Convention is being organised by the North East's Gannet group and will be held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The Guest of Honour will be Bob Shaw, author of many novels including *Night Walk*, *Shadow of Heaven*, *Palace of Eternity*, and co-author of the classic fannish novel, *The Enchanted Duplicator*, which has recently been reprinted in *Amazing*. Jan Guest of Honour will be Peter Weston, editor of *Speculation*, which was nominated for the Hugo in 1970. He is also founder of the huge Birmingham sf group.

The programme will include a model competition and an informal poetry reading as well as films, auctions and discussions. For full details contact: Ian Williams, 6 Greta Terrace, Chester Road, Sunderland, Co Durham SR4 7RD.

If you've never been to a Science Fiction Convention and don't know what they are, all I can say is – go along. You're in for the experience of a lifetime. Perhaps you feel, like many people when they first turn on to sf, that you're completely alone in a world of pop and football fanatics. Well, a con is a mind-blowing way to find out how wrong you are. There are discussions on every aspect of sf, talks by distinguished writers who come not only from England, but from all over the world, films, book and magazine auctions, and, in a light vein, fancy dress parades where robots and monsters prowl through the hotel. Above all, there are two hundred people who are excited about sf.

BSFA (British Science Fiction Association) is a society run by readers for readers. It's a get-together organization which welcomes people into the sf world. It looks after them at conventions, provides services like a tape library (you can hear former *Analog* editor John W Campbell talking on sf, or early Radio London tapes, among other items), and an information service. Its official magazine is *Vector* edited by Malcolm Edwards and well worth reading. If you want to get in touch, write to Keith Freeman, 128 Fairfield Road, Tilehurst, Reading RG3 5QP and ask him to tell you all about it.

THE GLOBE On the evening of the first Thursday in every month, sf fans and writers meet for a beer and a chat in informal surroundings at *The Globe*, Hatton Garden, London (near Chancery Lane tube station). If you're in London and want to meet like minded people along and introduce yourself. These convivial pub meetings have been going since before the war (Arthur C Clarke's *Tales From The White Hart* was based on them) and are well attended by many distinguished writers. New faces are always welcome.

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM This is the title of an extra-mural course in science fiction at the London University. The lecturers Philip Strick and Christopher Priest lead a discussion of sf in all its forms, with a detailed analysis of a wide selection of writers. These include, among others, Wells, Bradbury, CS Lewis, John Wyndham, Alfred Bester, Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Kurt Vonnegut, JG Ballard and Brian Aldiss. At the end of the course you can sit an exam which will give a Sessional (non-Diploma) Certificate.

There are two twelve-week terms. The first will be over by the time you read this and the second term begins on January 11. The lecturers say they are happy for people to come along and sit in. If you want to enrol, write to: The Deputy Director, Dept of Extra-Mural Studies, University of London, 7 Ridgeman Street, London WC1E 7AD. The classes themselves are held at the Stanhope Institute, Longford Street, London NW1 (by Portland Street tube). It costs £2.15 to register for the course.

THE SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION was originally set up as an academic body to look into the possibilities of science fiction in relation to education. Since then, the emphasis has been more on the fiction than on the education. The Foundation provides research facilities for graduate students and is a clearing house for information. If you are planning to attend or to teach a course on science fiction, the Foundation will tell you where to go, who to contact and so on. It has a comprehensive library of books available for postal loan. A lecture agency is also planned. For more detailed information, contact Peter Nicholls, Science Fiction Foundation, East London Polytechnic, Barking Precinct, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex. (Peter Nicholls also teaches a course on science fiction at the City Literary Institute.)

MISCELLANEOUS Leslie Flood of EJ Carnell Literary Agency tells us that paper back rights have been sold "for a record sum for a first novel" of Michael G Coney's *Mirror Image*. Rights sold to Sphere.

The Star Trek series by James Blish is being translated into German, Dutch and Greek. The series is based on the television scripts.



Clearing up after 'The March of the Robots' at the Bristol Convention 73

DAVE BOWE



Bristol Convention 73

George Hay founder of the SF Foundation

John Brunner at the Globe



'The March of the Robots' at the Bristol Convention 73

BOOKS OUT THIS MONTH

Paperbacks

The Ring of Ritornel by Charles Harness. Published by Panther. A complex story of quest and revenge against a backdrop of Galactic civilization by the author of *The Paradox Men* and *The Rose*.

Masque of a Savage Mandarin by Philip Bedford Robinson. Published by Panther. In this off-beat science fiction story with elements of black comedy, an evil genius experiments on his neighbour's brain with a laser beam.

Chronicles of Brass by Michael Moorcock. Published by Mayflower. A Paperback Original and the concluding volume in the Runestaff follow-up series.

The Lathe of Heaven by Ursula Le Guin. Published by Panther. Another outstanding book by the authoress of *A Wizard of Earthsea*.

Prosth Plus by Piers Anthony. Published by Sphere. A comedy about an inter-galactic dentist who is picked up by aliens.

Gray Matters by William Hjortsbrg. Published by Sphere. After the great holocaust, brains are stored until they reach a mental state worthy of a body. But one breaks loose . . .

Dark Inferno by James White. Published by Corgi. A story about survival when a space flight goes wrong.

Heinlein re-issues published by Pan:

The Puppet Masters
The Door into Summer
The Green Hills of Earth

The Far Out Worlds of A.E. Van Vogt. Published by New English Library Ltd. A collection of short stories.

Hardbacks

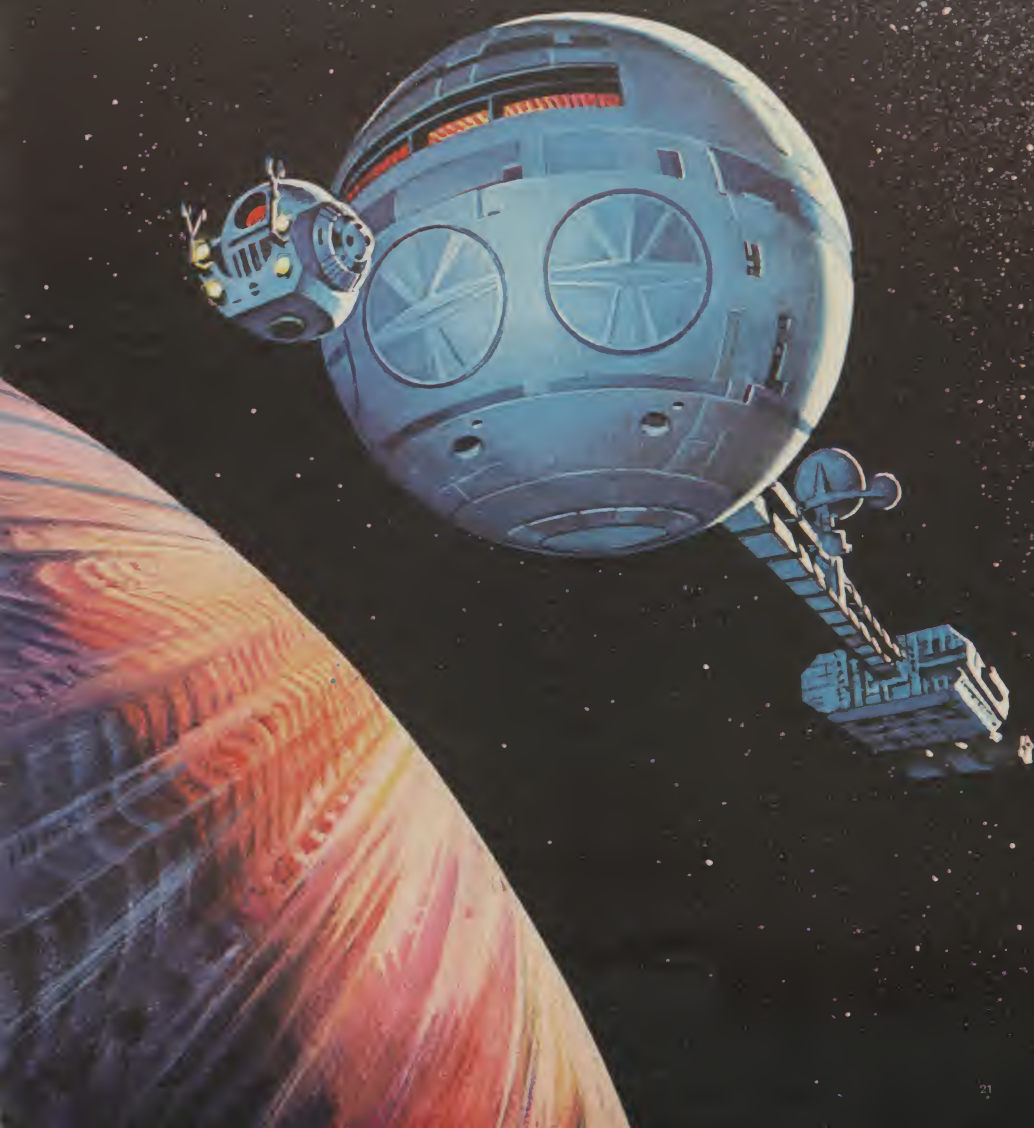
Planet Probability by Brian Ball. A sequel to his novel, *Probability Man*.
The Darkness on Diamondia by AE Van Vogt.
Dying Inside by Robert Silverberg. All published by Sidgwick & Jackson.



James Blish giving an after dinner speech at the Bristol Convention 73



PENNY GRANT









“**W**hat’s that, Williams?” demanded Anton.

“Wires,” said Lucky briefly.

“I know that, you lump.” He was suddenly furious. “What else? I’ll tell you what else. Those wires are set to explode every ounce of the atomite on board ship as soon as we take the ship back to base.”

Lucky jumped. “How can you tell that?”

“You’re surprised? You didn’t know this was one big trap? You didn’t know we were supposed to take this back to base for repairs? You didn’t know we were supposed to explode ourselves and the base, too, into hot dust? Why, you’re here as the bait to make sure we were properly fooled. Only I’m not a fool!”

His men were crowding close. Dingo licked his lips.

With a hiss Anton brought up his blaster and there was no mercy, no dream of mercy, in his eyes.

“Wait! Great Galaxy, wait! I know nothing about this. You have no right to shoot me without cause.” He tensed for a jump, one last fight before death.

“No right!” Anton, eyes glaring, lowered his blaster suddenly. “How dare you say no right. I have all rights on this ship.”

“You can’t kill a good man. The men of the asteroids need good men. Don’t throw one away for nothing.”

A sudden, unexpected murmur came from some of the pirates.

A voice said, “He’s got guts, Cap’n. Maybe we could use—”

It died away as Anton turned.

He turned back. “What makes you a good man, Williams? Answer that and I’ll consider.”

“I’ll hold my own against anyone here. Bare fists or any weapon.”

“So?” Anton’s teeth bared themselves. “You hear that, men?”

There was an affirmative roar.

“It’s your challenge, Williams. Any weapon. Good! Come out of this alive and you won’t be shot. You’ll be considered for membership in my crew.”

“I have your word, Captain?”

“You have my word, and I never break my word. The crew hears me. If you come out of this alive.”

“Whom do I fight?” demanded Lucky.

“Dingo here. A good man. Anyone who can beat him is a very good man.

Lucky measured the huge lump of gristle and sinew standing before him, its little eyes glittering with anticipation, and glumly agreed with the captain.

But he said firmly, “What weapons? Or is it bare fists?”

“Weapons! Push-tubes, to be exact. Push-tubes in open space.”

For a moment Lucky found it difficult to maintain an appropriate stolidity.

Anton smiled. “Are you afraid it won’t be a proper test for you? Don’t be. Dingo is the best man with a push-gun in our entire fleet.”

Lucky’s heart plummeted. A push-gun duel required an expert. Notoriously so! Played as he had played it in college days, it was a sport. Fought by professionals, it was deadly!

And he was no professional!

Pirates crowded the outer skin of the *Atlas* and of their own Sirian-designed ship. Some were standing, held by the magnetic field of their boots. Others had cast themselves loose for better viewing, maintaining their place by means of a short magnetic cable attached to the ship’s hull.

Fifty miles apart two metal-foil goal posts had been set. Not more than three feet square in their collapsed state aboard ship, they opened into a hundred feet either way of thin-beaten beryl-magnesium sheets. Un-

Pirates of the Asteroids

An Extract from the book
by Isaac Asimov

dimmed and undamaged in the great emptiness of space, they were set spinning, and the flickering reflections of the sun on their gleaming surfaces sent beams that were visible for miles.

“You know the rules,” Anton’s voice was loud in Lucky’s ears, and presumably in Dingo’s ears as well.

Lucky could make out the other’s space-suited shape as a sunlit speck half a mile away. The lifeboat that had brought them here was racing away now, back toward the pirate ship.

“You know the rules,” said Anton’s voice. “The one who gets pushed back to his own goal post is the loser. If neither gets pushed back, the one whose push-gun expires first is the loser. No time limit. No off-side. You have five minutes to get set. The push-gun can’t be used till the word is given.”

No off-side, thought Lucky. That was the giveaway. Push duels as a legal sport could not take place more than a hundred miles from an asteroid at least fifty miles in diameter. This would place a definite, though small, gravitational pull on the players. It would not be enough to affect mobility. It would be enough, however, to rescue a contestant who found himself miles out in space with an expired push-gun. Even if not picked up by the rescue boat he had only to remain quiet and in a matter of hours, or at most, one or two days, he would drift back to the asteroid’s surface.

Here, on the other hand, there was no sizable asteroid within hundreds of thousands of miles. A real push would continue indefinitely. It would end, as likely as not, in the sun, long after the unlucky contestant had smothered to death when his oxygen gave out. Under such conditions it was usually understood that, when one contestant or other passed outside certain set limits, time was called until their return.

Saying “no off-side” was saying “to the death.”

Anton’s voice came clear and sharp across the miles of space between himself and the radio receiver in Lucky’s helmet. He said, “Two minutes to go. Adjust body signals.”

Lucky brought his hand up and closed the switch set into his chest. The coloured metal foil which had earlier been magnet-set into his helmet was spinning. It was a miniature goal post. Dingo’s figure, a moment before merely a dim dot, now sprang into flickering ruddy life. His own signal, Lucky knew, was a flashing green. And the goal posts were pure white.

Even now a fraction of Lucky’s mind was far away. He had tried to make one objection at the very beginning. He had said, “Look, this all suits me, you understand. But while we’re fooling around, a government patrol ship might—”

Anton barked contemptuously, “Forget it. No patrol ship would have the guts to get this far into the rocks. We’ve a hundred ships within call, a thousand rocks to hold us if we had to make a getaway. Get into your suit.”

A hundred ships! A thousand rocks! If true, the pirates had never yet shown their full hand. What was going on?

“One minute left!” said Anton’s voice through space.

Grimly Lucky brought up his two push-guns. They were L-shaped objects connected by springy, gummed fabric tubing to the doughnutlike gas cylinders (containing carbon dioxide liquid under great pressure) that had been adjusted about his waist. In the old days the connecting tubing had been metal mesh. But that, though stronger, had also been more massive and had added to the momentum and inertia of the guns. In push duels rapid aiming and firing was essential. Once a fluorinated silicone had been invented which could remain a flexible gum at space temperatures and yet not become tacky in the direct rays of the sun, the lighter tubing material was universally used.

“Fire when ready!” cried Anton.

One of Dingo’s push-guns triggered for an instant. The liquid carbon dioxide of his gas cylinder bubbled into violent gas and spurted out through the push-gun’s needlelike orifice. The gas froze into a line of tiny crystals within six inches of its point of emission. Even in the half second allowed for release a line of crystals, miles long, had been formed. As they pushed out one way, Dingo was pushed in the other. It was a spashspace and its rocket blast in miniature.

Three times the “crystal line” flashed and faded in the distance. It pointed into space directly away from Lucky, and each time Dingo gained speed toward Lucky. The actual state of affairs was deceptive. The only change visible to the eye was the slow brightening of Dingo’s suit signal, but Lucky knew that the distance between them was closing with hurtling velocity.

What Lucky did not know was the proper strategy to expect; the appropriate defense. He waited to let the other’s offensive moves unfold.

Dingo was large enough now to see as a humanoid shape with head and four limbs. He was passing to one side, and making no move to adjust his aim. He seemed content to bear far to Lucky’s left.

Lucky still waited. The chorus of confused cries that rang in his helmet had died down. They came from the open transmitters of the audience. Though these were too far away to see the contestants, they could still follow the passage of the body signals and the flashes of the carbon dioxide streams. They were expecting something. Lucky thought.

It came suddenly.

A blast of carbon dioxide, then another appeared to Dingo's right, and his line of flight veered toward the young Councilman's position. Lucky brought his push-gun up, ready to flash downward and avoid close quarters. The safest strategy, he thought, was to do just that, and to move as slowly and as little as possible otherwise, in order to conserve carbon dioxide.

But Dingo's flight did not continue toward Lucky. He fired straight ahead of himself, a long streak, and began to recede. Lucky watched him, and only too late the streak of light met his eyes.

The line of carbon dioxide that Dingo had last fired travelled forward, yes, but he had been moving leftward at the time and so it did likewise. The two motions together moved it directly toward Lucky and it struck his left shoulder bull's-eye.

To Lucky it felt like a sharp blow pounding him. The crystals were tiny, but they extended for miles and they were travelling at miles per second. They all hit his suit in the space of what seemed a fraction of an eyelid's flicker. Lucky's suit trembled and the roar of the audience was in his ear.

"You got him, Dingo!"

"What a blast!"

"Straight toward goal post. Look at him!"

"It was beautiful. Beautiful!"

"Look at the joker spin!"

Underneath that there were murmurs that seemed, somehow, less exuberant.

Lucky was spinning or, rather, it seemed to his eyes that the heavens and all the stars in it were spinning. Across the face plate of his helmet the stars were white streaks, as though they were sparkles of trillions of carbon dioxide crystals themselves.

He could see nothing but the numerous blurs. For a moment it was as though the blow had knocked the power of thinking out of him.

A blow in the midriff and one in the back sent him, still spinning, further on his hurtling way through space.

He had to do something or Dingo would make a football of him from one end of the Solar System to the other. The first thing was to stop the spin and get his bearings. He was tumbling diagonally, left shoulder over right hip. He pointed the push-gun in the direction counter to that twist, and in lightning releases pumped out streams of carbon dioxide.

The stars slowed until their turning was a stately march that left them sharply defined points. The sky became the familiar sky of space.

One star flickered and was too bright. Lucky knew it to be his own goal post. Almost diametrically opposed was the angry red of Dingo's body signal. Lucky could not fling himself backward beyond the goal post or the duel would be over and he would have lost. Beyond the goal post and within a mile of it was the standard rule for a goal ending. Nor, on the other hand, could he afford to get closer to his opponent.

He brought his push-gun straight up over his head, closed contact, and held it so. He counted a full minute before he released contact, and through all the sixty seconds he felt the pressure against the top of his helmet as he accelerated downward.

It was a desperate manoeuvre, for he threw away a half hour's supply of gas in that one minute.

Dingo, in outrage, yelled hoarsely, "You flustered coward! You yellow mugger!"

The cries of the audience also rose to a crescendo.

"Look at him run."

"He's got past Dingo. Dingo, get him."

"Hey, Williams. Put up a fight."

Lucky saw the crimson blur of his enemy

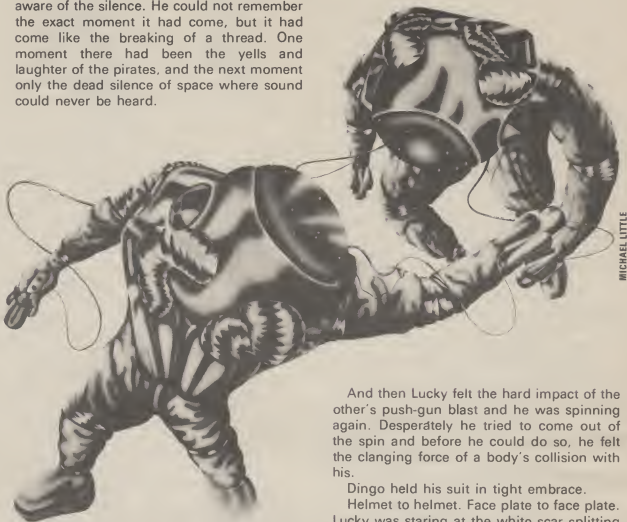
again.

He had to keep on the move. There was nothing else he could do. Dingo was an expert and could hit a one-inch meteorite as it flashed by. He himself, Lucky thought ruefully, would do well to hit Ceres at a mile.

He used his push-guns alternately. To the left, to the right; then quickly, to the right, to the left and to the right again.

It made no difference. It was as though Dingo could foretell his moves, cut across the corners, move in inexorably.

Lucky felt the perspiration beading out upon his forehead, and suddenly he was aware of the silence. He could not remember the exact moment it had come, but it had come like the breaking of a thread. One moment there had been the yells and laughter of the pirates, and the next moment only the dead silence of space where sound could never be heard.



MICHAEL LITTLE

Had he passed beyond the range of the ships? Impossible! Suit radios, even the simplest type, would carry thousands of miles in space. He pushed the sensitivity dial on his chest to maximum.

"Captain Anton!"

But it was Dingo's rough voice that answered. "Don't yell. I hear you."

Lucky said, "Call time! There's something wrong with my radio."

Dingo was close enough to be made out as a human figure again. A flashing line of crystals and he was closer. Lucky moved away, but the pirate followed on his heels.

"Nothing wrong," said Dingo. "Just a gimmicked radio. I've been waiting. I've been waiting. I could have knocked you past goal long ago, but I've been waiting for the radio to go. It's just a little transistor I gimmicked before you put on your suit. You can still talk to me, though. It'll carry a mile or two. Or at least you can talk to me for a little while." He relished the joke and barked his laughter.

Lucky said, "I don't get it."

Dingo's voice turned harshly cruel. "You caught me on the ship with my blaster in its holster. You trapped me there. You made me look like a fool. No one traps me and I don't let anyone make a fool out of me in front of the captain and live very long after that. I'm not goading you for someone else to finish. I'm finishing you here! Myself!"

Dingo was much closer. Lucky could almost make out the face behind the thick glassite of the face plate.

Lucky abandoned attempts at bobbing and weaving. That would lead, he decided, to

being consistently out-maneuvred. He considered straight flight, pushing outward at increasing velocity as long as his gas held out.

But then afterward? And was he going to be content to die while running away?

He would have to fight back. He aimed the push-gun at Dingo, and Dingo wasn't there when the line of crystals passed through the spot where a moment before he had been. He tried again and again, but Dingo was a flitting demon.

And then Lucky felt the hard impact of the other's push-gun blast and he was spinning again. Desperately he tried to come out of the spin and before he could do so, he felt the clanging force of a body's collision with his.

Dingo held his suit in tight embrace.

Helmet to helmet. Face plate to face plate. Lucky was staring at the white scar splitting Dingo's upper lip. It spread tightly as Dingo smiled.

"Hello, chum," he said. "Pleased to meet you."

For a moment Dingo floated away, or seemed to, as he loosened the grip of his arms. The pirate's thighs held firm about Lucky's knees, their apelike strength immobilizing him. Lucky's own whipcord muscles wrenched this way and that uselessly.

Dingo's partial retreat had only been designed to free his arms. One lifted high, push-gun held butt-first. It came down directly on the face plate and Lucky's head snapped back with the sudden, shattering impact. The relentless arm swung up again, while the other curled about Lucky's neck.

"Hold your head still," the pirate snarled.

"I'm finishing this."

Lucky knew that to be the literal truth unless he acted quickly. The glassite was strong and tough, but it would hold out only so long against the battering of metal.

He brought up the heel of his gauntleted hand against Dingo's helmet, straightening his arm and pushing the pirate's head back. Dingo rocked his head to one side, disengaging Lucky's arm. He brought the butt of his push-gun down a second time.

Lucky dropped both push-guns, let them dangle from their connecting tubes, and with a sure movement snatched at the connecting tubes of Dingo's guns. He threaded them between the fingers of his steel gloves. The muscles of his arms lumped and tightened painfully. His jaws clenched and he felt the blood creep to his temples.

Dingo, his mouth twisted in fierce joyful anticipation, disregarded everything but the upturned face of his victim behind the

transparent face plate, contorted, as he thought, with fear. Once more the butt came down. A small cracking star appeared where the metal had struck.

Then something else gave and the universe seemed to go mad.

First one and, almost immediately afterward, the other of the connecting tubes of Dingo's two push-guns parted and an uncontrollable stream of carbon dioxide ravaged out of each broken tube.

The tubes whipped like insane snakes, and Lucky was slammed against his suit first this way, then that, in violent reaction to the mad and uncontrolled acceleration.

Dingo yelled in jolted surprise and his grip loosened.

The two almost separated, but Lucky held on grimly to one of the pirate's ankles.

The carbon dioxide stream slanted and Lucky went up his opponent's leg hand over hand.

They were apparently motionless now. The chance whippings of the stream had left them even without any perceptible spin. Dingo's push-gun tubes, now dead and flaccid, stretched out in their last position. All seemed still, as still as death.

But that was a delusion. Lucky knew they were travelling at miles per second in whatever direction that last stroke of gas had sent them. They were alone and lost in space, the two of them.

Lucky was on Dingo's back now and it was his thighs that gripped the other's waist. He spoke softly and grimly. "You can hear me, Dingo, can't you? I don't know where we are or where we're going, but neither do you. So we need each other now, Dingo. Are you ready to make a deal? You can find out where we are because your radio will reach the ships, but you can't get back without carbon dioxide. I have enough for both of

us, but I'll need you to guide us back."

"To space with you, you scupper," yelled Dingo. "When I'm done with you, I'll have your push-tubes."

"I don't think you will," said Lucky coolly. "You think you'll let them loose, too. Go ahead! Go ahead, you lashing ripper! What good will that do? The captain will come for me wherever I am while you're floating around with a busted helmet and frozen blood on your face."

"Not exactly, my friend. There is something in your back, you know. Maybe you can't feel it through the metal, but it's there, I assure you."

"A push-gun. So what. It doesn't mean a thing as long as we're held together." But his arms halted their writhing attempt to seize Lucky.

"I'm not a push-gun duellist." Lucky sounded cheerful about it. "But I still know more than you do about push-guns. Push-gun shots are exchanged miles apart. There's no air resistance to slow, and mess up the gas stream, but there's internal resistance. There's always some turbulence in the stream. The crystals knock together, slow up. The line of gas widens. If it misses its mark, it finally spreads out in space and vanishes, but if it finally hits, it still kicks like a mule after miles of travel."

"What in space are you talking about? What are you running off about?" The pirate twisted with bull strength, and Lucky grunted as he forced him back.

Lucky said, "Just this. What do you suppose happens when the carbon dioxide hits at two inches, before turbulence has done anything at all to cut down its velocity or to broaden the beam. Don't guess. I'll tell you. It would cut through your suit as though it were a blow-torch, and through your body, too."

"You're nuts! You're talking crazy!"

Dingo swore madly, but of a sudden he was holding his body stiffly motionless.

"Try it, then," said Lucky. "Move! My push-gun is hard against your suit and I'm squeezing the trigger. Try it out."

"You're fouling me," snarled Dingo. "This isn't a clean win."

"I've got a crack in my face plate," said Lucky. "The men will know where the foul is. You have half a minute to make up your mind."

The seconds passed in silence. Lucky caught the motion of Dingo's hand.

He said, "Goodbye, Dingo!"

Dingo cried thickly, "Wait! Wait! I'm just extending my sending range." Then he called, "Captain Anton . . . Captain Anton. . ."

It took an hour and a half to get back to the ships.



Melancholia has a Plastic Core

continued from page 4

always want more than I can give you, but I always wanted less than you could give me. Really, I am on a perpetual emotional diet. I prefer to get by without the violins – you're yelling for orchestras. 'He hunted her down the parsecs, but all he really needed was an illusion . . .'

As she spoke, she was settling down again before the cube. Unable to stand any more, I burst from the house, and became almost immediately lost in the maze of little safe streets round about. The troublesome wind of Melancholia blew me along. I looked up to see if the Shield was still in place; the untroubled night of the solar system reigned there; Earth hung low and golden in Cassiopea.

In the little houses, men and women crouched before their flickering shrines. I saw them as I went by their mail-boxes. They would be eyeing the representation of Zbeennaa, nourishing their own dreams and illusions about her, the hausfrau medusa. I walked on, and the patterns about me changed as the night grew later. Still smitten by her artifices, I told myself what was happening in one of her terrible mock-poetic commentaries.

"Friendly other lights in other houses undergo a pattern shift towards midnight. Even on a planetoid with a plastic core, circadian rhythms affect the electricity flow. Those little squares of punched light start to close, or shift upstairs to dim and fade behind blinds, leaving a faint star where the lines converge. People are all together in their isolation, i.e., they all shuffle off to bed at approximately the same time."

Probably meant that John Widows' serial

was over for the night.

The wind carried me along. The buffeting it gave me, I thought – how suitably symbolic! Disturbed to my soul, I also objectively wondered whether I should not creep back to her and go to sleep for the night. Tomorrow I could leave for Corridor. But the darkness held a new note, a sound deeper than the nonsense of the wind. I recognised it – the failed sound of water giving in to gravity.

As the last suburban light went out in the last upper floor, I found myself standing on the edge of the Nigguchot Falls, by the greatest river on Melancholia. (I say greatest – it was also the only river on Melancholia, and circulated daily round the seven hundred and fifty kilometre equator of the planetoid.) Down fell the water, up flew the spray, carried by the wind; it flecked my cheek as if it were contemptuous spittle. It would be easy now to yield to the great inorganic powers of the universe, to end the frenzy of my consciousness and restore my chemicals to the elemental if.

"I really did love you, Zbeennaa, with an overpowering love," I yelled into the wind and the chaos. "I gave my heart and my whole self to you, and you cared nothing for it! What the hell went on between us? What the hell has been going on between us all these long desolate, desperate years?"

My feelings were too broken for words, even shouted words. I stood there with my arms upstretched, hoping perhaps that some sudden gust of wind would bear me out and down into the thundering flood. My ulna lit. I snapped it out. Then I dropped my hands to my side.

The elements have nothing on human temperament. In a brief while, the storm inside me played itself out. Utterly exhaust-

ed, I turned away from the Falls and tried to find my way back to Zbeennaa's anonymous little house.

Three hours later, almost reduced to crawling, I found it, simply because it was the only house in the district with a light still punching a hole in the dark.

I flung my clothes off, letting them drop to the carpet, and staggered upstairs. She was sprawled in the bed, sordid and inviting, spruce but untidy, dreaming but awake.

Trying to look evil – no easy matter in the nude – I said, "I decided to live for your sake."

"Darling . . ." And then, "So you did watch my serial?"

" . . . uh? . . ."

"That was one of my lines . . . 'I decided to live for your sake' . . . It's fun, isn't it?"

"Many a worse man – many a better man – would have murdered her there and then. Such was my state of mind, I burst into tears."

"You rotten twisted hag, why do you always drive me off with wisecracks when all I ask for is sincerity? I nearly committed suicide, and you joke about it."

"Sincerities are your speciality, Lafecadio, only you aren't expert at them. It wasn't wisecracks that drove us apart, as you claim – nothing but wisecracks ever brought or kept us together. Anyhow, I'm asleep, and dreaming of muton boulders."

Nothing for it but to reach for the light switch. The last punched square of light on Melancholia blew away into the artificial dark and a sad suburban silence descended.

In the morning, I would have to think about dealing myself some more power-cards.

She put an arm slyly round my neck.

"Hemingway's Breath," she murmured. "Gorgeous . . ."

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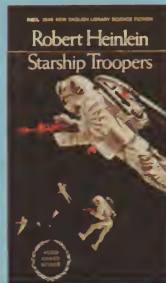
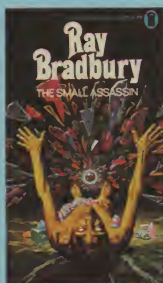
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